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## **Special Edition - Urban Acupuncture**

### **From the Guest Editors**

Kirralie Houghton, Jaz Hee-jeong Choi and Artur Lugmayr

The term urban acupuncture refers to a concept where a localised intervention or treatment is used for the revitalisation and (re)creation of cities by targeting strategic points, poking or activating networks into action. These actions impart stimuli for further responses and opportunity through small projects rather than large developments. Urban Acupuncture activates dynamic transformative forces of the place and focuses on the maintenance of a healthy situation rather than on the cure of problems, and thus metaphorically resonates with the principles of the practice of acupuncture in traditional Chinese medicine.

Co-creation and placemaking can be utilised for urban acupuncture, therapies such as interventions to (re)create, enliven, and reinvigorate urban spaces. These interventions can lead to a co-creation of places through a new generation of planning and placemaking. Urban activation, tactical urbanism, and guerilla urbanism may all fall within the development of this theme.

Data analysis of urban environments provides important strategic information to demonstrate points of need and critical 'blockages' for urban flows. Consideration of topics within this theme includes projects like citizen data creation, living labs, data visualisation, and city analysis through social network data.

The special issue takes a multidisciplinary and future oriented approach, with a diversity of disciplinary perspectives for discussions on achieving location based therapies for urban environments through technological and socio-cultural uses of digital media that support people's engagement in (re)creating their urban environments into a livelier place.

We are pleased to present this special issue which investigates a range of digital and interactive technologies that can highlight, share, and action urban interventions. The issue highlights projects that have the revitalisation quality of an 'acupuncture' treatment for cities, projects that are either able to pinpointing critical locations and elements through data collection, or to mobilise community in a way that will effectively 'poke' the city to make it react in positive or beneficial ways.

We open with "Social Networks for Urban Places: The Promise and Practice of Urban Acupuncture," which sets the scene and contextualizes the concept of urban acupuncture with a case study from Brisbane Australia. The papers cover a range of considerations from pedagogical interests in "Guerrillas in the [Urban] Midst: Developing and Using Creative Research Methods—Guerrilla Research Tactics," which provides insights for real world interactions on urban issues to a series of examples in urban acupuncture in action.

"Infostructures: Towards a Complementary Approach for Solving Urban Challenges through Digital Technologies," presents the concept of "infostructures" which might very well be part of the solution to tackle some of our major contemporary urban problems, especially in the areas of transportation and energy.

A specific neighbourhood approach to urban acupuncture is presented in “Mobile Design as Neighborhood Acupuncture: Activating the Storytelling Networks of South L.A” highlighting the use of simple digital technologies to positive connect and revitalize communities. While Messeter’s paper on “Social Media Use as Urban Acupuncture for Empowering Socially Challenged Communities,” uses the term urban acupuncture to describe technological interventions into an urban area that complemented other social interventions to address community needs, demonstrating the concept can indeed be practical, innovative, and effective.

Urban acupuncture is essentially a neo-planning approach that broadens communication outputs and inputs, is augmented through digital technology (specifically ICT). It provides the opportunity for planners, designers and citizens together in physical actions (temporary or permanent). In this way to reconceptualising how we understand and use public place. It has the potential to actively assist in the creation of vibrant liveable cities. Urban acupuncture is about building hybrid places of the virtual and physical city.